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SENSITIVE

FROM USMISSION UNESCO
STATE PASS USTR BALASSA
IO/UNESCO FOR JANE COWLEY
EUR/ERA FOR PETER CHASE
L/EUR FOR PETER OLSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SCUL](#) [ETRD](#) [EU](#) [CJAN](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: USUNESCO: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES CULTURAL DIVERSITY
CONVENTION WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL AND SEVERAL AMBASSADORS

REF: A) Paris 5990 and previous

[1](#)1. Summary. The draft cultural diversity convention was a primary topic of discussion during Ambassador Oliver's meetings with UNESCO Director General (DG) Matsuura and several ambassadors, including the outgoing chairman of the general conference. All agreed that the convention must be adopted by consensus. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) During a September 2 luncheon meeting the DG told the ambassador that while he cannot be seen as leaning toward one side or another he has insisted and will continue to insist that the final convention must be a consensus document. The DG also told the ambassador that when he publicly made this statement during a culture ministers' meeting at UNESCO in June, the French culture minister reacted angrily to his suggestion.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Later on September 2, Ambassador Oliver met with Nigerian Ambassador Michael Omolewa, the outgoing chairman of the General Conference. (Note: by UNESCO tradition the chair holds the title between General Conference sessions and receives special deference.) Omolewa admitted that he had not attended the final negotiating session in June and had no idea how badly it had gone. He said that he assumed that a consensus document had emerged. When he heard that there had been no consensus, he expressed a strong desire to make sure the current draft is treated as a preliminary text and that consensus is reached. He also expressed surprise that the EU is unwilling to reopen the document to find consensus. (Comment: the draft convention is increasingly being seen at UNESCO as a struggle between the US and the EU.) Omolewa expressed concern when Ambassador Oliver explained potential domestic ramifications posed by the draft and how those could influence US reengagement with UNESCO.

[1](#)4. (SBU) During a courtesy call on September 2, the new Saudi Arabian Ambassador to UNESCO, Mohammed Aldebian, also expressed concerns about the convention and its effects on us engagement with UNESCO. He had attended the June negotiations as a member of the Saudi delegation and was aware of the poisonous atmosphere surrounding the meeting. Aldebian encouraged Ambassador Oliver to have conversations on the topic with other states. He also suggested that the US Delegation write a letter to other delegations setting out our concerns with the convention.

[1](#)5. (SBU) A similar tone was struck in a conversation with Afghan ambassador Aziz on September 1. Aziz stated that "everyone agreed that there should be a convention on cultural diversity," but in order for the convention to be effective it must be accepted by all members states. He said that there is still time to negotiate and try to get the convention postponed for two years. He also said that strong diplomatic work is needed for the US to get enough support from member states so that none feel like they are caught out on a limb. (Comment: he has told us before that he feels caught between the US and the EU.) He also suggested that delegations needed to be instructed by their capitals to support the US position.

[1](#)6. Comment: We now have had the DG and several UNESCO ambassadors express their concern about the potential harm of the draft cultural diversity convention. The question is whether we can pick off enough delegations in time to stop the EU/Canadian/Brazilian juggernaut.

Oliver